WESTERN PEOPLE

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GOING STRONG

RUTH SCHILLER AT 75

WESTERN PEOPLE

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Ruth Schiller. Photo by Karen Morrison. Story, page 8.

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome
Editor: Michael Gillgannon
Features Ed.: Karen Morrison, Sheila Robertson
Editorial Assistant: Donna Skaalid
E-mail: **people@producer.com**

Guidelines

Eight learners of English, concurring
That teachers' instructions kept blurring,
Convened after school and collated
Their lecture notes, here duplicated:
Avoid the prevailing confusion
Of pairs like illusion/allusion;
Don't use "who" for "whom" or conversely;
Express yourself clearly and tersely;
Beware native speech—it is devious,
With nucular, kewpon, mischievious;
A verb should agree with its tension
Because it promotes comprehension;
Two negatives cancel each other
Except with a sister or brother;
A noun, whether common or proper,
Requires an adjective stopper.
These rules, quickly scrawled during courses,
Came straight from the mouths of the horses,
And so, though a few seemed surprising,
The students began memorizing.

When this was accomplished, they brightened,
Shook hands, and went home, much enlightened.

— **William Walden**

Dear Reader

The long-playing disc, and hence the turntable to spin it on, was supposed to die at the hands of the compact disc. And it almost did except that a few diehard audiophiles have kept it on life support.

I still have a couple hundred LPs sitting in the basement, providing ample reason, along with 18 years' worth of *National Geographics*, never to move again. It's the weight thing — the more tonnage you have to haul around, the less likely it is that you will do so.

My old turntable (cool cats never called them "record players"), which spun records 33 and a third times a minute is long gone, however, which brings up a fascinating sidebar: What was the point of that extra one-third revolution? Wouldn't 33 have been good enough? Or 34?

Audio freaks claim vinyl does a better job of "holding onto" the music in its analog way than CDs do in their digital way. This never made much sense to me, since the G-forces at work inside a record groove would make the wildest roller coaster ride on the planet look like an afternoon in a hammock for that little diamond stylus. (Cool cats never called them "needles.") A mote of dust would add to the babel of background noise — and records are nothing if not dust collectors. All the CD laser has to do is read zeroes and ones. What's so hard about that?

My theory about why the turntable/tone arm/cartridge combination has refused to die has nothing to do with what the music sounds like, and everything to do with what the record playing kit looks like. It looks (here comes that word again) cool. The turntable looks solid and dependable, the cartridge looks delicate, even though it isn't, and the tone arm looks like something every gynecologist's office should have three or four of. A CD player is just another black box. What goes on in there is too mysterious to make a gadget fancier's ears perk up.

Michael Gillgannon

It's in the clay

By John Dietz

John Dietz

Stephen Girard continues with his pottery after overcoming a bone tumor in his left arm.

Down in the valley of the Frenchman River, near the fossil beds of bygone days, Stephen Girard bends over his humming wheel and spins another vessel. This will be a casserole, the next may be a cup.

In the potter's right hand, the stuff of mudballs becomes a delicately shaped and artfully glazed quiche dish. He's formulated the glaze. He's found and refined the clay. He's even formed the monolithic cast kiln, from other local clays, where his glazed and decorated creations will be fired.

Girard had no idea he'd be back in his home of Eastend as a craftsman in clay when he left here after high school in 1964.

"I was about 25 years old when I realized this stuff that I used to muck around with when I was a kid was clay and was used for pottery and other things," he said.

Visiting Regina in 1970, he discovered a pottery studio in a university building where he had studied education. "I had never seen a pottery studio. I had no idea what those people were doing, but I was invited to give it a try," he recalled. "I really liked clay right away."

It was a passion that would not go away even as he pursued other careers in teaching and trades.

Then, in 1986, life changed when a bone tumor developed in his upper left arm. To stop the cancer, doctors removed his humerus bone from the elbow joint to within two inches of his shoulder. He also lost the tricep muscle and the radial nerve. He could no longer lift his left wrist, or open or close his fingers.

Microsurgery followed. A tendon transfer and months of physiotherapy allowed Girard to lift his wrist. He also achieved some use of his thumb and fingers. The elbow joint remains unstable, because tendon and ligaments were removed.

He helped a potter friend during the 1990 Christmas rush by turning his left shoulder into the work. He used his left arm to support the soft clay while shaping it with his right hand.

"The most difficult part was achieving use of my left hand. Lack of pushing strength in my left arm, due to the missing tricep muscle, limits the size of piece I can throw on the wheel."

Knowing he could again control the clay on a wheel, Girard committed himself to becoming a professional potter. "I realized that pottery is actually my passion; all the other things I'd done were about trying to make money."

Seven difficult years of self-training and development followed while Girard worked in a small village south of Regina. His clay supply was in the Frenchman Valley, 285 miles west. He travelled constantly, for clay and to sell products at craft sales.

Since he moved to Eastend in 1998, his business has boomed.

The village of 700 on the Red Coat Trail has a steady stream of summer tourists. Girard and others renovated an older 1,800 square-foot building and named it Whitemud Clay Studio. AlleyKatz, a cappuccino bar and gift shop specializing in Girard's pottery and a busy day-care centre are also housed there.

There is inspiration here for the artist in collecting, refining, purifying and preparing the clay he will shape. He collects eight to 10 tons a year from abandoned and active clay pits in the surrounding valley walls.

"I drive out with a truck and shovel and as many friends as I can round up," he said. He blends four types of clay into the final clay he will put onto his wheel.

A fifth clay, very high in silica and aluminum, is ideal for kiln material. He makes it into bricks, or alternatively pours the refined clay into forms to create "cast" kilns.

"Making the clay is quite simple, but the chemistry and firing is very complex. I love the process of exploring clays and glazes and building kilns as much, if not more, than making pottery."

As he quietly works away, local children and parents often gather. He's given up charging for lessons, or even for clay. "Maybe there'll be a clay person some day among them," he said. ■

Go with the flow

Courtesy the Vancouver Courier

By Sheryl Salloum

In his late 60s, Bob Jones began wistfully admiring windsurfers skimming the waves.

"My wife and others told me it was just a sport for youngsters and an old man nearing retirement should forget it," he said.

But he couldn't forget it. In January 1980, while on holidays in Maui, Jones saw a senior windsurfing and became encouraged.

Back home, Jones purchased a board, sail, wet suit and two lessons. "Some thought I should have been committed to a mental institution, but I proved them wrong. I have found windsurfing to be an ideal sport for all ages."

Jones also found that the sport was "a great way to meet like-minded people in a happy atmosphere." He has since taught others how to windsurf and found it satisfying to help them also become skilled board riders.

Jones retired when he was 68, after 50 years in the forest industry as a log scaler. His work involved measuring and grading logs, often balancing on and jumping from one slippery position to another on loose booms of floating logs.

With such a background, Jones felt agile enough to undertake windsurfing. "The big thing is to keep active up to your ability. I don't go out in the big winds anymore. I used to go out in winds up to 25 knots. These young kids they'll go out in whatever there is: 35, 40 knots. I can't handle that. Now 15 knots is my limit."

The dangers of windsurfing include brisk winds that can throw you. "You get catapulted and go flippin' over the sail."

A broken mast is another danger. "You must untie the clew (that is the back corner of the sail) wrap the sail, mast and boom together, tie it securely, and tie on top of the bundle so nothing drags in the water."

He recalled a time when the sail slipped a little and was dragging in the water. "I paddled in, but it was an awkward position for stroking and I got some bursitis in my shoulder." That required more than a year of physiotherapy to repair.

Jones's ability to windsurf was recently challenged when he experienced a partial but permanent loss of vision due to macular degeneration.

He turned to hiking and cycling. At age 84, he is "slowing down," citing the purchase of a power mower to help him on the steep inclines of his yard. "And when cycling up the same old hills I find I dismount a little sooner on the steep parts."

Jones has always had satisfying hobbies and quips that he is "jack of all trades and master of none."

He has self-published a dozen booklets that include an autobiography, a windsurfer's instruction guide, family histories, and Jones's memories of the Queen Charlotte Islands and work as a log scaler.

With strong lenses and valuable help from the CNIB, Jones is once again working with his computer, most recently completing a booklet that celebrates his 50-year marriage.

Jones emphasizes that all these hobbies are great fun. "I was always busy, and I'm happy when I'm busy."

During the years he spent in logging camps, Jones found creative ways to relieve the tedium. He went mountain climbing and had a boat and made trolling poles for it. He got a canning machine that handled 28 Mason one-pound jars. "If I had a good day's fishing I would can my catch."

When he was 75, Jones became interested in kayaking but could not master the Eskimo roll. "You try these things, but if the odds are against you, then you do somethin' else."

He advises seniors to keep active, but not to strain themselves or overdo it. "Don't take it too easy; just keep goin'."

He survived the Depression years with his family by gathering berries, catching fish, growing a garden and living economically. He also survived poor grades and an inferiority complex at school, the result of laziness and disinterest, he said.

Jones's thoughts on aging are best described in a short article he wrote called "Jericho Oldtimer" for The Centre Board in July 1984.

"Well, who wouldn't like it after considering the only alternative? To really like it, though, takes considerable good luck as well as good management. If you've managed the first requirement and been born from long-lived lineages, it's a big help. Then if you've had a job for 50 years that gently exercised your body as well as your wits you're almost there. And along the way, if you've developed enough hobbies and interests and never had enough time to be bored with them — well then retirement can be nirvana.

"And now, to all this add windsurfing, committee meetings, sailing school and girl watching. No wonder I don't have time to work anymore.

AT 84, BOB JONES ADMITS HE'S SLOWING DOWN. "WHEN CYCLING UP THE SAME OLD HILLS I FIND I DISMOUNT A LITTLE SOONER ON THE STEEP PARTS."

"But there's something I often hear that makes me cringe. 'Bob, now that you're retired and have lots of time you should. . .' As though I hadn't had 50 years to dream of what I would do if only I could. But this is often just a hidden desire to vicariously live my life by having me do what they would love to do themselves.

"So I try to explain with arithmetic. It now takes me twice as long to do anything, so even though I have three times the freedom, I have four times the number of things to do and probably only a fifth of my years left (again, only with luck)."

Last year, Jones was the honorary host of the 1999 Canadian Masters Windsurfing Championship held at Jericho Beach, B. C.

He won't be donning a wetsuit again, but Jones is kept busy with other activities. He walks up to 14 kilometres each day. He volunteers in Pacific Spirit Park, dispensing maps, information and personal recollections of a locale familiar to him since the 1920s.

Even with disabilities, Jones said retirement can be exhilarating. ■

TRAVEL

A ROOM WITHOUT RUE

By Robin and Arlene Karpan

Pricing for hotel rooms is getting more complicated all the time.

Smaller hotels and motels might simply have one standard rate, but larger hotels and chains often have a mind-boggling array of different prices, depending on who you are and when you are travelling.

The most common special price is the corporate rate. Exactly who qualifies for this varies widely, but the main stipulation seems to be that you are travelling on business. Showing a business card might be necessary, however you might get a corporate rate simply by asking for it.

You might qualify for a better rate because of some affiliation, such as being a member of an automobile association or a frequent flyer program. Seniors' rates are fairly common, but what is meant by "senior" could be 65, 60, or even 55 years or over. It often pays to ask if discounts are offered.

The internet is another tool for comparison hotel shopping. If you go to a hotel's own web site, you might find special promotions or a "web special" that you can book online. Be cautious when you see a web site claiming to offer the best room rates in a particular city, region or even nationwide. Many of these sites could be "buy-ins" where the hotels may pay to be listed, or pay the web site a commission for bookings. Smaller, non-participating hotels could in fact have better rates.

While planning ahead usually saves you money, there is also hope for procrastinators.

While planning ahead usually saves you money, there is also hope for procrastinators. On our way to Central America a couple of years ago, we were faced with an overnight stop in Miami. We tried several hotel toll-free reservation numbers, the internet, and listings in tourism publications in an effort to find a reasonably priced place to stay near the airport. There were plenty of choices all right, but nothing under $79 U.S.

We ended up in Miami airport without reservations. After collecting our bags, we went to the accommodation board, a feature at to most major airports, where direct phone lines connect you to participating hotels. At last we found the hotels we were looking for.

Along with the major chains were a few hotels in the $30–$40 range, including one place that advertised an "Airport Special" of $36 with free shuttle service to and from the airport. When we arrived at the hotel, we saw huge signs in front proclaiming "specials" starting at $45. Drive-in guests were actually paying a higher price than we were, yet the hotel had to go to more work for airport guests because of the free shuttle service. Go figure.

That situation was not unique to Miami. We found that in many places in the United States, the best rates were often posted at the airport, perhaps because of greater competition. Whether or not you want to chance arriving in a strange city without reservations is of course another matter. You never know when every available room is taken because of the Left-handed Unemployed Bagpipe Technician Convention.

Depending on the city, an airport hotel might be an attractive option for leaving your car while you're away. We occasionally fly out of Calgary and we found that some hotels in the airport area will let you leave your car in their parking lot at no charge, providing that you stay at least one night before or after your flight. Combine this with free shuttle service to and from the airport, and it could work out cheaper than leaving your car in airport parking lots that usually charge an arm and a leg plus GST.

The main thing to keep in mind is that hotel room prices are subject to supply and demand. Arrive at a busy time without reservations and you'll probably be faced with paying full price. Arrive when business is slow, and the hotel might offer a better rate. It doesn't hurt to ask if the rate you are being quoted is the best available. Who knows, you might qualify for the left-handed unemployed bagpipe technician rate. ■

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ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS BUY A PAIR OF EARRINGS
LET'S JUST HOPE THEY KNOW HOW TO STERILIZE THEIR EQUIPMENT...
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NOW HEPATITIS... THAT'S SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN...
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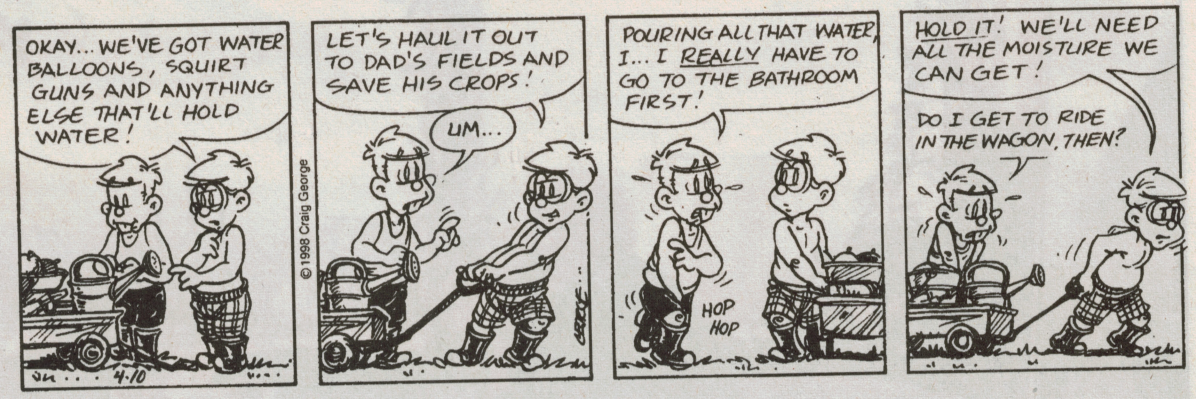
Schulz

RURAL ROOTZ


OKAY... WE'VE GOT WATER BALLOONS, SQUIRT GUNS AND ANYTHING ELSE THAT'LL HOLD WATER!
LET'S HAUL IT OUT TO DAD'S FIELDS AND SAVE HIS CROPS!
UM...
© 1998 Craig George
POURING ALL THAT WATER, I... I REALLY HAVE TO GO TO THE BATHROOM FIRST!
HOP HOP
HOLD IT! WE'LL NEED ALL THE MOISTURE WE CAN GET!
DO I GET TO RIDE IN THE WAGON, THEN?

For BETTER or for WORSE

HEY! THAT LOOKS LIKE A COLLEGE BROCHURE!
I'M CHECKING OUT COURSES FOR THE FALL.
I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT FINISHING MY ENGLISH DEGREE, BUT MAYBE A COMPUTER COURSE WOULD BE MORE USEFUL.
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HECK!-I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WANT! EVERYTHING'S NUTS RIGHT NOW, SO DON'T ASK ME!-I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!!!
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WHAT'S WITH MOM?
SHE'S THINKING ABOUT BECOMING A "MATURE STUDENT."
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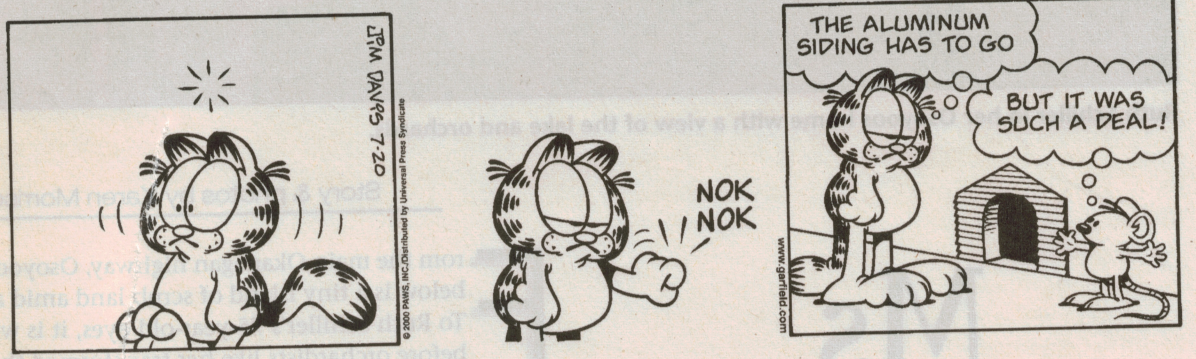
JIM DAVIS 7-20
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THE ALUMINUM SIDING HAS TO GO
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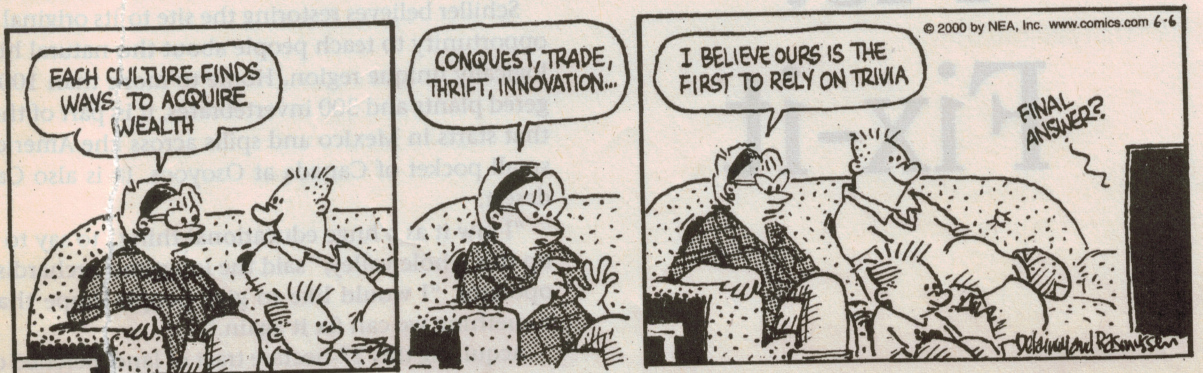
EACH CULTURE FINDS WAYS TO ACQUIRE WEALTH
CONQUEST, TRADE, THRIFT, INNOVATION...
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I BELIEVE OURS IS THE FIRST TO RELY ON TRIVIA
FINAL ANSWER?
Delainey and Patterson

Ruth Schiller in her Osoyoos home with a view of the lake and orchards.

Ms. Fix-it

Story & photos by Karen Morrison

From the main Okanagan highway, Osoyoos's Desert Centre below is a tiny island of scrub land amid a sea of orchards. To Ruth Schiller's 75-year-old eyes, it is what Osoyoos was before orchardists like her transformed the valley.

Schiller believes restoring the site to its original state provides an opportunity to teach people about the natural history of this ecologically unique region. Home to more than 100 rare and endangered plants and 300 invertebrates, it is part of the Sonoran Desert that starts in Mexico and spills across the American border into a small pocket of Canada at Osoyoos. It is also Canada's only arid desert.

"I saw it as a huge educational thing, to say to them we messed up this whole valley," said the longtime orchardist and fruit stand operator. "I would like to give people hope that when we ruin something we can fix it again."

Acquiring this 27-hectare tract of land perched on a shelf of land

above her own farm is just the beginning. The centre, established by the Osoyoos Desert Society last July, serves as an interpretive centre and research facility, with reclamation activities well under way to banish weeds introduced in recent times.

"If we didn't get it, it probably would have been used for housing," said Schiller of the former Crown grazing land.

She has watched the valley grow from a few hundred to hundreds of thousands as orchardists like her and her late husband Fred began the transformation of the dry valley to lush irrigated fruit farms. "When people came, no one cared about the environment; we just saw a job in it," she said, matter-of-factly.

Currently president of the desert society, Schiller has led many other community projects and organizations.

Her résumé lists involvements from the local school board and arts council to the Okanagan University College, Canada Council and the Canadian Conference of the Arts. She states the obvious: "I'm a joiner. I had to be in there or I was scared I missed something. . . . To me life is just a free show and I'll take it wherever I get it."

Schiller's volunteer work has been recognized often with awards that include the prestigious Order of British Columbia.

An appreciation of culture has always been a part of her makeup, from her conception in Russia to her upbringing as the daughter of an aviator at Fokker in Germany.

She and Fred raised a son, Fred, 54, and a daughter, Moni-Claire, 46, who each have two children and remain in their home province.

Her biggest influences were Fred, who gathered together friends to discuss the fine arts, a teacher in Osoyoos who read poetry to students and a neighbor with a passion for the natural world.

Schiller said it's impossible to imagine a life away from here, so she remains on the home place and rents out the 12-acre orchard to a family. "Why would I sell land, they don't make any more of that," she said.

She lives inside a home taken from the pages of a home and garden magazine, with a manicured yard and ivy canopies over the wraparound deck. "My house is my art," she said.

The only thing missing is Schiller standing still long enough to soak in the panoramic view of the lake and the orchards or the color co-ordinated lampshades and couches.

Asked why she continues with her volunteer work in her retirement years, she is quick to respond. "Some friends live the most useless life in Florida," she said. "For me it has always been payback time. I do it because this country has been good to me."

Her parents moved her to Osoyoos at age 14 to learn English while visiting her German relatives. Then war broke out and a return to an oppressive Germany became too dangerous.

"My husband used to say this war had to be fought, to stop Hitler," she said of Fred, who had immigrated 10 years earlier than she from Germany and who she married while Mackenzie King was prime minister.

When her parents immigrated in 1950, she helped support them, sharing her home and her salary. Out of a hundred-dollar-a-month bookkeeping job, she gave them $40. "We were never ever poor but we were broke lots of times," Schiller said.

It is against the backdrop of the war years that her own left-leaning political viewpoints took shape. "I get nervous with the very right wing, extreme viewpoints in either direction," said Schiller, who saw Liberals as the middle of the road "live and let live" party.

She has been politically active since she was 25. She became president of a local riding association when there were only four Liberals. She prefers a political convention ("a shot of adrenaline in my veins") to a holiday.

She has a host of friends of all political stripes, and respects others "standing for what they believe in."

Hugh Davidson of Victoria, friend and former Canada Council member, recalled "legendary fights" with his dear friend. He called her "a feisty, forthright lady" who served Western Canada and her home province well.

He credited her with promoting dance, visual arts and music locally. (She started the Okanagan-Mainland Regional Arts Council and sat on the B.C. Arts Board.)

"A remarkable woman — she's a whiz bang," Davidson said. "Ruth jumps into things about 800 percent. She's tireless when the rest of us tire."

Marlin Clapson, executive director of the desert centre, said her interest and dedication never wanes. "It's a determination that nothing will stop her."

"There is no one who can do what she is doing for the desert society," said Clapson.

He has already helped raise $1.5 million and Schiller was instrumental in involving him in the formidable task of raising $5 million.

"She will seek out people like a talent scout or entrepreneur," said Clapson,

The Desert Centre at Osoyoos, B.C. uses boardwalks to keep visitors off the fragile habitat.

who noted Schiller is just as likely to be raising funds as booking desert tours. "Ruth keeps the energy going."

Schiller looks ahead to ongoing improvements to the centre — a permanent interpretive centre being one of them. And she also looks back proudly on attracting the Vancouver Symphony to perform in "wild and wooly Osoyoos in the '50s"

She is pleased to be among the first farmers to be appointed to the Canada Council, serving for two terms. "You can be a farmer and have a great big knowledge of the arts," she said. She and her husband had a circle of friends who regularly got together to discuss philosophy and music. "We were discussing [philosopher Soren] Kierkegaard when [others] still thought it was something to eat."

Her husband died 11 years ago at age 83, having suffered a stroke 10 years earlier. She cared for him at home up until four months before his death.

She is alone now, but not lonely.

"The longer I'm alone the more I like it." said Schiller, who noted she needs time alone to recharge her batteries, launch one of 500 different diets she has tried or unwind with television. She calls herself "a news junky" who delights in a new treat, a German language channel.

The latest in a string of appointments for the well-travelled Schiller is to represent British Columbia on the National Advisory Council on Aging, which takes her to Ottawa four times a year to examine improved services for seniors.

Curiously, the desert centre project evolved from meetings she attended representing arts groups that were designed to bolster local tourism. "I went in thinking it would help tourism and got turned on to the environment," she said, laughing.

Schiller stresses the importance of working for the community, educating people about their local history and ensuring others will carry on the work. "It is so worthwhile," she said. ■

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KiD SPiN
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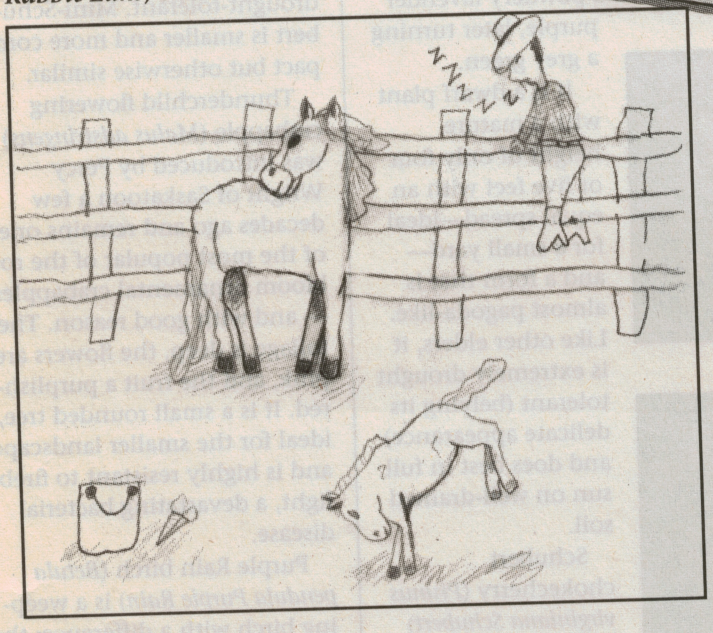
Send your original colored or black-and-white art (plain white paper, please), science questions, poetry, short stories or anything else you'd like to see. Make sure you include your name, age, full address and a telephone number!

Cheralyne Martens, 10
Rabbit Lake, Sask. ▼



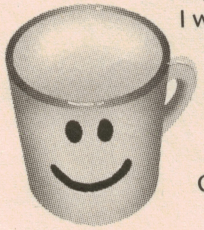
Mr. H's Coffee Cup

Shannon McGillivray, 13
Rapid View, Sask.

(This was written for my teacher, Mr. Helgeton, who is a coffee addict.)

Gleaming white I used to be,
Spotless days I used to see.
On a crowded shelf I sat,
Enjoying life from a linen mat.

Then one day I was jerked
From the corner where I lurked.
Hairy hands held me up,
I was doomed to be ...
The coffee cup!



Six times a day,
Filled to the brim,
My future looks
Quite bleak and grim.

From my depth
Flows a stream
Of black, thick
Vile caffeine!

Now gripped so tightly by my ear,
And only washed
Just ONCE a year

If I should ever
Fall and break,
Be sure it's not
MY place you'll take

For the path is hard,
And the road does crumble
You've got to be tough,
Sincere and humble

And now my life is almost done
Destroyed ... by Mr. Helgeton.

Pen Pals

Hi! My name is Joanne Wiebe. I'm looking for a penpal age 13-15, male or female. I live on a farm and enjoy snowshoeing, camping, snowmobiling, reading and biking. If you have the same interests, write to Box 664, Fort Vermilion, Alta. T0H 1N0.

Hi! My name is Delaynie Thompson. I'm 13 years old. I love listening to Creed, Kid Rock, like writing poetry. Will respond to all letters. Please write to: P.O. Box 202, Star City, Sask. S0E 1P0.

Hi! My name is Kimberly Kossowan and I'm 13. I like drawing, pets, camping and listening to music. Would like a boy or girl penpal from age 12-14. Will respond to all letters. — P.O. Box 234, Glendon, Alta. T0A 1P0.

Hi! My name is Ashley Banbury. I'm interested in horses, art and dancing. I'm 11 and want a girl penpal ages 10-12. Please write to: P.O. Box 265, Wolseley, Sask. S0G 5H0.

Hello, my name is Elizabeth Hube and I'm 11. Would like to have a female Christian penpal between ages 11-12. My hobbies are outdoors, basketball, music and internet. General Delivery, Grovedale, Alta. T0H 1X0.

Hi! My name is Gayle Gareau. I'm 13. During my spare time I like to talk on the phone and the internet. If I seem like a good penpal, write: P.O. Box 29, Bellevue, Sask. S0K 1L0.

My name is Mary Halushka. I'm 16 and looking for a boy or girl penpal aged 13-17. I enjoy reading, writing, playing volleyball, sports and country music. Also enjoy meeting new people, rodeos and outdoors. My address is: P.O. Box 145, Goodeve, Sask. S0A 1C0.

Gal aged 16 looking for penpal aged 15 to 18 guy or gal. I enjoy sports, music, drawing, and more. Write to: Kimberly Bucsis, P.O. Box 2716, Melville, Sask. S0A 2P0.

Hi! My name is Magdalena Hofer. I'm looking for a Christian penpal 13-14 years old. I'm 13 and like horses and art. Will respond to all letters. Write to: P.O. Box 69, Smoky Lake, Alta. T0A 3C0.

Hi! My name is Karlee Ford. I'm 12 and enjoy sports, shopping, animals, piano, drawing and more. Write: P.O. Box 118, Stewart Valley, Sask. S0N 2P0.

Hi! I like reading, drawing, cartoons and much more. I'm not keen on sports. Would like penpal ages 12-15, outside of the prairies. Write to: Megan Weinberger, P.O. Box 265, Lucky Lake, Sask. S0L 1Z0.

GARDEN CHAT

COLOR PURPLE, PART II

By Sara Williams

Continuing to greater heights with trees and shrubs of the color purple (see June 8 column for part one) are Diabolo ninebark, the redleaf rose, Dropmore Fernleaf elder, Schubert chokecherry, Thunderchild flowering crabapple and Purple Rain birch.

Diabolo ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius Diabolo*) is a selection of the species that is native to Eastern North America and a relative newcomer to the prairie landscape. Like the common ninebark, it has an upright, spreading form with a height of four feet (although it's easily pruned to a lower height). The dark purple, lobed foliage contrasts well with the creamy flowers and the salmon-red seed capsules that follow. Plant in full sun or partial shade.

The redleaf rose (*Rosa rubrifolia*) is native to Europe but has been a denizen of prairie gardens for almost a century. Up to two metres tall with an almost equal spread, it has graceful arching branches and a tendency to sucker — ideal for a rural setting but too coarse for a small landscape. The foliage is reddish purple and the flowers a single pink. The red hips are retained through the winter. Very drought tolerant once established, it is best planted in full sun in well-drained soil.

Top: Diabolo ninebark in seed. Bottom: redleaf rose (Rosa rubrifolia)

Dropmore Fernleaf elder (*Sambucus racemosa Dropmore Fernleaf*) was introduced by Dr. Frank L. Skinner from Manitoba in 1950. A chance seedling, it is one of the most finely dissected elders I've seen. The foliage can only be described as lacy. The new growth is a powdery lavender purple, later turning a grey green.

It is a dwarf plant with a mature height of only four or five feet with an equal spread—ideal for a small yard—and a form that is almost pagoda-like. Like other elders, it is extremely drought tolerant (belying its delicate appearance) and does best in full sun on well-drained soil.

Schubert chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana Schubert*) offers fragrant white flowers in long racemes, edible but astringent fruit and purple foliage. Purple-leafed chokecherries can be quite variable in height, color of foliage, and their ability to sucker. The Schubert is usually about 15 feet in height and forms a single trunk.

The leaves emerge green in the spring but turn purple by early July. New growth in midsummer, often prompted by a heavy rain, will again emerge green (often prompting the query "Why did my purple chokecherry turn green?") but will purple on maturity.

Like all chokecherries, it is susceptible to black knot, a fungal disease that resembles a cow pie wrapped carefully around the stem. There is no chemical control. Simply prune off the affected area about six to 12 inches below the signs of obvious infection. Like most members of the plum family, the Schubert chokecherry does well in full sun on well-drained soil and is drought-tolerant. Mini-Schubert is smaller and more compact but otherwise similar.

Thunderchild flowering crabapple (*Malus adstringens*) was introduced by Percy Wright of Saskatoon a few decades ago and remains one of the most popular of the rosy bloom ornamental crabapples — and with good reason. The foliage is deep, the flowers are pink, and the fruit a purplish-red. It is a small rounded tree, ideal for the smaller landscape and is highly resistant to fireblight, a devastating bacterial disease.

Purple Rain birch (*Betula pendula Purple Rain*) is a weeping birch with a difference: the serrated leaves are dark purple, contrasting sharply with the white bark. Its mature height is about 12 metres with a spread of six to nine metres.

Native to Europe, it is hardy to zone two. My own specimen has showed no signs of winter injury during the four winters I've had it. Like other birches, it needs full sun and even moisture and is best when planted on well-drained soil. Mulching is beneficial. ■

Doug Bone

The Siemens family of Fiske, Sask.: Mitchell, Laurel, Bob, Joelle, Charlene.

'Part of the world'

By Doug Bone

There are whole fence lines still buried by the dust storms of the 1930s in the Fiske, Sask., district where Bob and Charlene Siemens run the Longview Farm and bed and breakfast business. In the late 1980s, it was happening again to some of their already eroded and fragile 1,400 acres of sandy loam.

Bob, then a member of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association, was convinced that adopting new technology and reducing tillage were the answers. He was among the first in the province to use the herbicide Roundup, in a minimum till strategy for moisture and soil conservation.

They both talk about the looks Bob used to get when he dressed in a Father's Day present from Charlene, who was uncomfortable with farm chemical use. The present was a full coverage chemical protection suit, probably the first one used in the community. "That was still in the era of blowing out sprayer tips with your mouth," said Bob.

The minimum till fields were disappointing, though. "That was a big learning curve for me that day," said Bob, as he recalls an afternoon spent with a chemical representative, looking at a huge infestation of wild tomato — a weed they had never before seen. The seeds had been there all along, the plant's growth suppressed by his previous use of 2,4-D.

He decided then that "magic bullet" solutions had only been addressing symptoms of a bigger problem. A mistake is only a mistake if you make it twice, said Bob, who then decided it was time to rethink their farming approach.

Back in the early 1970s when Bob began farming, the business of agriculture was pretty straightforward. There was an established farming system that seemed to work, and an infrastructure that supported it. If a family worked hard, there was money to be made. And Bob made his share of it, running a straight grain operation with his brother and finishing a few beef animals in a winter feedlot.

Then agriculture in Saskatchewan banged its nose smack into the global economic, environmental and policy decision problems of the 1980s and 1990s.

Charlene was from a mostly urban background. When she and Bob married in 1981, she had few preconceived ideas about farm life, except that ani-

mals having babies on the land should be part of the picture. In 1986, the year their first child Mitchell was born, it was Charlene who bought the first 20 cows.

Mitchell now has two sisters. Laurel was born in 1988 and Joelle in 1993. Charlene feels that having animals on the farm gives the whole family a closeness to the land and the cycles of life.

They may not have realized it at the time, but gradually seeding grass to combat erosion problems and buying those first few cows had put them on the road to becoming full-fledged grass farmers.

By 1990, they were farming on their own. On the advice of Saskatchewan Agriculture's livestock expert, Len Piggot, now a holistic management educator, they attended a holistic management course taught by its founder, Allan Savory. "That course made a big change for us here," said Charlene. "The quality of life goals are as important as the farming thing."

The next winter Bob and Charlene began to set holistic goals together. "That's likely when I first understood how concerned Charlene was about the use of farm chemicals," said Bob. "I'd never seen any alternative either."

The Siemens' goals include leaving the land better than they found it, supporting a thriving community, providing a healthy environment for their children, living a physically active lifestyle and making a profit from their farm.

They belong to a holistic management group that meets once a month to share ideas and a potluck meal. They believe it is important to have the support of people who understand what they are doing.

A disastrous bout of trouble in 1991 with a used harvester clinched their decision to convert their whole farm to grass. During the next several years, they were able to trade their last half-section of crop land to a neighbor for a half section of tame pasture right beside them and to complete the grass planting on their remaining cultivated land.

Raising livestock on grass was the easiest way to improve the land and decrease a reliance on technology

Bob planted a variety of grass species together, believing there are "benefits from encouraging as much bio-diversity as possible."

"The water cycle, I think, too is improving," said Charlene. She tells of driving across their grassland right after a two and a half inch downpour to take pictures of washouts and muddy sloughs on an adjacent piece of summerfallow. "There were no sloughs on our grass . . . but that water comes up later."

Interestingly the land they have seen improve the most is right in their yard where they have been intensively using portable chicken and sheep pens. They say in the future they may use other animals instead of, or in combination with, the cattle to harvest their pasture land.

Organically certifying their livestock is something they are also considering. "The consumer demand is possibly going to be there," said Charlene. "It would be relatively easy for us to do that," said Bob. "We have a lot more flexibility and a lot more control over our farm now than we did in the past."

Although they focus on raising beef cattle, they have options available on the marketing end. They can choose to sell their animals as calves, as yearlings, or as long or short yearlings. Finishing animals on grass is also one of the possibilities, and a direction they believe the industry will head. They are building their herd with hardy, small to medium framed animals.

Even if the current high cattle prices are factored out, the Siemens believe their operation would still be profitable.

They use accrual accounting to give them an ongoing financial picture and careful budgeting that includes a planned profit. They keep input costs way down and have made a concerted effort to spend their dollars locally.

Off-farm, the Siemens are quite involved in their local church and its various projects. They enjoy their bed and breakfast cottage but it is not a huge money maker.

Bob believes it is more profitable to graze land than to hay it, so they use extended grazing seasons. "You chase technology. You can chase it as fast as you can go and not catch up."

They have also chosen not to invest in new haying equipment. Instead, they buy most of the hay they require and feed it on land that needs additional organic matter. "It's a cheap way to build soil," explained Bob.

Doing as much of the farm work as possible manually has helped him feel good physically and has kept diesel fuel use down to about 300 gallons a year.

Bob feels the use of transgenic plants decreases the gene pool, making agriculture more vulnerable to disease and pests. As for hormone use, he said it is labor intensive.

"It doesn't matter what livestock industry you look at, they're all feeding a low level of antibiotics in their confined [systems] and you've got to be concerned about that when you see what's happening in terms of penicillin resistance in humans.

"I think we tend to look at the whole picture, here on our farm, and that's what most people don't do. They're either looking at production or profitability, and that allows them to overlook some of these other things."

The uncertainty of change has been stressful for Bob and Charlene. They were able to sell their farm equipment when it still had some value, and the government payout, when the Crow transportation subsidy ended, came at the right time. They used the cash from these two sources to pay off debt and to invest in cattle.

Every farm situation is different, so the Siemenses hesitate to give advice about the current farm crisis. They only say that having a holistic goal has given their family a sense of direction and control that had been lacking.

"A goal to a traditional farmer maybe means having another section of land or a better tractor, but you know when we're talking about goals it involves your family and what you really want."

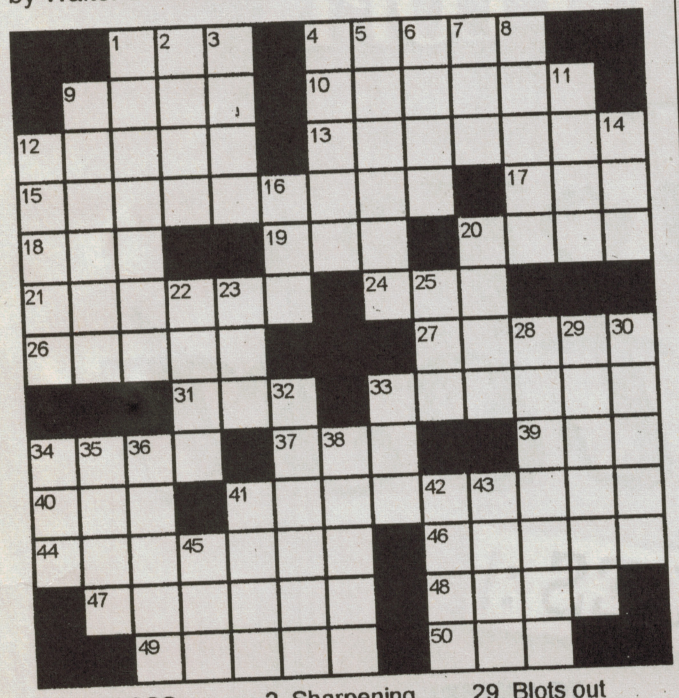
Mitchell, Laurel and Joelle like to spend a lot of time reading or using their computer, but they say that they like the animals "most of the time" and the space outside to do whatever they want. All three say they want to live on a farm when they grow up.

Bob hopes that computer technology will allow people to work from home, feeling it will aid rural rejuvenation.

"Our children could in fact live in Fiske, Sask. and be part of the world," he said. ■

Canadian Criss Cross

by Walter D. Feener

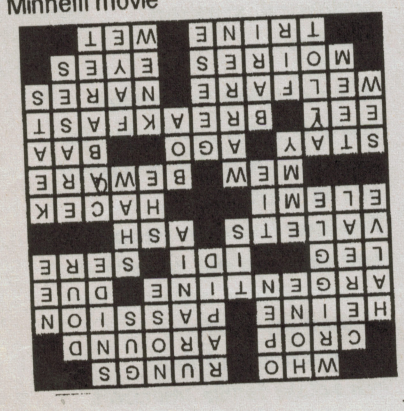


ACROSS

1. Which person?
4. Ladder steps
9. Riding whip
10. Here and there
12. "Atta Troll" author
13. Heart's desire
15. Silvery
17. Payable now
18. Tripod part
19. Amin of Uganda
20. Gunlock catch
21. Hotel employees
24. Hard wood
26. Gum resin
27. Inverted circumflex
31. Gull
33. Look out for
34. Call a poker bet without raising
37. Time past
39. Sheep's bleat
40. Slimy fish
41. Morning meal
44. Financial aid for the needy
46. Nostrils
47. Watered patterns
48. Cyclone centers
49. Threefold
50. Rainy

DOWN

1. Squirm
2. Sharpening stone
3. Generous in giving
4. Fast
5. Astronomy Muse
6. Olfactory organ
7. Disney mule
8. Slyly sarcastic
9. Food for 41 Across
11. Gloomy
12. Share equally
14. Formally called
16. "...where ignorance is bliss/___ folly to be wise."
20. "Pygmalion" author
22. Statuette award
23. Make the same score
25. That girl
28. Minnelli movie
29. Blots out
30. "Hyperion" author
32. Rabbit breeding place
33. Killer snake
34. Make clothes
35. Be swarming with
36. Distribute
38. Ganders and brants
41. Apulia's capital
42. Had learnt
43. Actress Dunaway
45. Coniferous tree



MAILBOX

Listings are free but only run once. Please be brief. Issues are prepared three weeks in advance of publication date. Send info to: Mailbox, Western People, Box 2500, Saskatoon S7K 2C4.

Wanted: Copy of Hawaiian Ordeal – Ukrainian Contract Workers 1897-1910 by Michael Ewanchuk or information where copies might be obtained. Please contact: Lorne Cherneski, Box 1246, Swan River, Man. R0L 1Z0, 204-734-3153.

Wanted: Copy of play titled One Foot in Heaven. Also, words and music to song Red River Valley. – Norma Hawthorne, Box 148, Drumheller, Alta. T0J 0Y0.

Looking for pins from the 2000 Labatt Brier: Tankard, volunteer, sponsors, hotels and pub pins. Also, want the Stanley Cup replicas found in cases of Labatt's Blue. – Dan Pederson, 34075 McCrimmon Dr., Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 2V6.

Trying to find any information on Lynn Roy Shupp, born in 1898 in the Michigan area. Moved to Buffalo Gap in the 1930s and worked as a laborer. He left Buffalo Gap for a time then moved back, we assume. If anyone has any memories of Mr. Shupp, please contact: S. Holuk, Box 263, Aylsham, Sask. S0E 0C0.

Looking for an electrical cord for a Commodore computer, model 4032-12, serial #B5007482. – Elaine McCall, 8222 Hwy 97 South, Quesnel, B.C. V2J 6M4.

Would the lady requesting old ties please resend address. – Mrs. O. Elliott, 591 - 26th St. E., Prince Albert, Sask. S6V 1V4.

Wish to trace George Creelman who immigrated to Canada years ago, or his descendants. May have been a botanist and had a lily named after him. May have lived in Creelman, Sask. – Ken Woodhouse, 98 Phillips Cres., Saskatoon, Sask. S7H 3N1.

Wonowon (Blueberry) homecoming reunion, Aug. 4-6, 2000. You are invited to attend this weekend celebration and events with friends and neighbors who were at one time or are still at Wonowon, B.C. or area. Please send names and addresses of interested persons, or for more information, to: Laurie Dowd, R.R. 1, Site 2, Comp. 17, Fort St. John, B.C. V1J 4M6, 250-785-4358 or Hattie Close, 10404 - 92nd St., Fort St. John, B.C. V1J 3H8, 250-787-7583.

Marriott School reunion, July 28-29, 2000. Former students or teachers (all years) contact: Reunion Committee, Box 712, Rosetown, Sask. S0L 2V0, 306-882-3090.

Wanted: Words and music to hymn, In the Upper Garden. Will pay for copying and postage. –Box 271, Consul, Sask. S0N 0P0.

TOYS

Word Find puzzle
by Janice M. Peterson

When all the words in the list have been found, the letters left over will spell the solution.

M	A	S	K	E	N	I	L	O	P	M	A	R	T	B
P	R	T	E	S	U	O	H	L	L	O	D	X	U	N
D	O	O	O	M	A	R	B	L	E	S	O	I	O	D
I	P	T	C	B	S	R	A	C	T	B	L	O	T	O
C	I	R	G	K	O	A	M	E	E	D	L	E	E	O
E	H	A	U	N	I	R	S	H	I	L	D	L	D	F
K	S	T	I	U	I	N	T	N	A	I	C	T	D	C
C	E	T	T	S	I	N	G	B	S	Y	G	S	Y	I
U	C	L	A	A	I	B	N	H	C	I	A	I	B	T
R	A	E	R	K	L	N	E	I	O	G	M	H	E	S
T	P	T	C	O	O	S	B	B	P	R	E	W	A	A
P	S	A	C	P	U	P	P	E	T	S	S	J	R	L
M	J	K	S	R	E	I	D	L	O	S	E	E	C	P
U	S	S	K	C	U	R	T	T	E	L	Z	Z	U	P
D	C	O	S	T	U	M	E	R	A	C	Y	O	T	S

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Balloon
Bicycle
Building Blocks
Cars
Costume
Dice
Dishes
Doll House
Dump Truck
Games
Guitar
Jack-in-the-Box
Marbles
Mask
Plastic Food
Puppets
Puzzle
Rattle
Robot
Rocking Horse
Soldiers
Space Ship
Spinning Top
Teddy Bear
Toy Car
Train Set
Trampoline
Trucks
Whistle

Solution (14 letters):

Amusing objects

Western People Photo Contest

THE RULES:

We're looking for photos that highlight the people of Western Canada.

We'll be awarding a $1,000 top prize, $500 for 2nd place, $250 for 3rd place, $150 for 4th place and $100 for 5th place.

Winners will be announced in October and their photos featured in Western People.

Enter today!

TO ENTER:

- Photos must be recent (taken between Jan. '98 and the present) and must include the photographer's name, telephone number and mailing address as well as information about the subject. No more than three entries per photographer. Entrants' income from photography must not exceed 25% of total income.
- Prints or slides are acceptable in black and white or color formats.
- Photos will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
- By entering this contest, entrants grant permission for their photos to be published in The Western Producer/Western People and used on our website or in promotional material. Staff of Western Producer Publications and their immediate family members are ineligible.

Entries must be received by Aug. 31, 2000